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Tiedekunta-Fakultet-Faculty Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta		Laitos-Institution-Department Department of Sociology
Tekijä-Författare-Author Nurmi, Tuulikki		
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<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>The promotion of sexual health as a crucial component of health and welfare is an essential part of health care services and a topic of the health care professionals' work. As experts in health education, public health nurses have a key role in sexual health promotion.</p> <p>In the course of the last three decades the national health administration has developed and supported health promotion activities of the health sector and co-actors by giving guidelines and recommendations, by producing materials, by supporting training, research, information and programmes and by organizing follow-up. As a result of goal oriented and long-term activities the outcomes in public health are positive; rates of abortions and sexually transmitted diseases are low in international comparisons. Many important topics remain, however, to be developed; sexual education of young people, sexual counselling in the health care services, family planning services, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and prevention of adverse effects associated with sex business.</p> <p>This study documentates measures in sexual health promotion from 1970s to 2000 as seen from the health care central administration. The empirical part of the study investigates the professional expertise of public health nurses being graduated in the spring of 1973, 1987 and 1995. The expertise is studied by means of professionalism. When defining the components of expertise the PLISSIT-model is also used. In this study, the main components of expertise are as follows: good knowledge in sexuality, positive attitude to sexuality and motivation in sexual education and training. Own sexual experiences and training in the sexual health of the graduates were studied, as well. Training was evaluated by using answers of the graduates and teachers.</p> <p>All the sub-components of the sexual health expertise have improved systematically and statistically from 1973 to 1995. The liberal attitudes towards young people's intercourse, homosexuality, occasional sexual relationship and masturbation have improved most. In each questionnaire motivation in sexual education was highest towards interpersonal counselling, lowest towards presentations in the media. Religion mentioned by the graduates as an important factor in the life was strongly connected to the results. One fifth of the 1995 graduates had still poor knowledge and one seventh was reluctant to sexual education. All graduates, however, shared the opinion that sexual education is an essential component of public health nurse profession. The differences between training institutes were remarkable. In the field of sexual health, public health nurse graduates could be classified as high level experts, reluctant experts, strict experts, enthusiasts, inhibited, ignorants, preachers and non-experts. The discussion of this study represents recommendations for the development of teaching in the field of sexual health.</p>		
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